

FEATURE – OKLAHOMA FARMER REBUILDS FARMS

INTRO: An Oklahoma farmer is partnering with the US Dept of Agriculture to turn ordinary farms into conservation showcases. USDA's Bob Ellison has more. (1:55)
(refeed from 4-08)

OKLAHOMA RANCHER FRANK AUSTIN MAY BE A FARMER TO MOST FOLKS, BUT HE'S A CONSERVATIONIST FIRST. HIS PASSION IS TO TRANSFORM ABUSED AND NEGLECTED LAND INTO PRODUCTIVE GRASSLAND.

Frank Austin, Oklahoma Rancher: Every day, when I get up, I figure if I do something to improve the land, that gives me self satisfaction as far as me myself, but I also know that that's going to help the bottom line as far as my pocketbook too.

FRANK STARTS WITH A CONSERVATION PLAN, USUALLY IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE'S NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE.

Duane Crider, USDA-NRCS: Well he's a true conservationist, he'll take a contract or a plan and he isn't a guy that just says, well whatever you guys say is fine. He works with it, thinks about it, helps us make the changes it takes to really make the thing work correctly.

FRANK SAYS USDA CONSERVATION PROGRAMS, INCLUDING COST-SHARING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, ARE INVESTMENTS THAT MAKE GOOD BUSINESS SENSE. THEY ALSO TAKE TIME AND CARE.

Frank Austin: You know, you can't never walk on a piece of property and walk off and decide what it needs. It takes time and I'll generally study it for a year and then I go get the whoever's the area conservationist and talk to him and the technicians and I pick up all the ideas I can pick everyone's brain I can pick, I pick and then I start putting my program together.

WHEN HE'S FINISHED, HE HAS PRODUCTIVE LAND AND PEACE OF MIND.

Frank Austin: The place don't look nothing like the day I started, cause there's ditches you could've put a pickup in and you couldn't have seen them. It's all level, you can drive all the way over it. It's all grass, virgin terraces, ponds, fences. It's a beautiful looking place.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT NRCS CONSERVATION PROGRAMS CONTACT YOUR LOCAL USDA SERVICE CENTER. FOR THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE I'M BOB ELLISON.